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PROGRESS REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA



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October 21, 1978

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

CALIFORNIA
DESERT CONSERVATION
AREA



Summary

As noted in Section 601 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (43 U.S.C. 1701, 1781), the California Desert:

- Contains historical scenic, archaeological, environmental, biological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational and economic resources uniquely located adjacent to an area of large population.
- Is a total ecosystem that is extremely fragile, easily scarred and slowly healed, with current use pressures already taking a growing toll.
- Must have interim critical management while a multiple-use plan for all resources, based on sustained yield to provide resources for future generations, is being formulated for implementation by September 30, 1980.

This is the first of two interim progress reports on the California Desert Program called for under FLPMA. In summary, the planning task is well underway and on schedule to meet the September 30, 1980, completion deadline and critical interim management work is meanwhile in progress.

Issues to be dealt with in the plan have been identified and include:

- How much Wilderness and where?
- Management of motorized vehicle activity on-road and off-road.
- Utility corridors and powerplant siting.
- Mineral exploration and development - Where and how much?
- Public land availability vs. private and military needs.
- Grazing and range conditions.
- Protection of wild burros and horses vs. range resource control.
- Natural and cultural resource protection.

The planning effort falls basically into two phases, each encompassing two years. The first involves massive inventories of resources and the values people place on them coupled with the building of a public involvement process and a planning framework. The second encompasses the analysis of inventory

information and public input to draft a comprehensive land use plan and environmental impact statement; to obtain public review and comment; and then to finalize the land use plan and its accompanying EIS.

At this point the inventory job covering over 16 million acres (12.5 million acres of public lands plus intermingled private lands) is well on its way to on-schedule completion by February 1979. Data is being entered and stored in computer memory banks for later retrieval and analysis as it is obtained.

The planning framework development is on schedule with policy guidelines and a prototype plan outline and EIS preparation plan drafted for use when the analyzed data is ready to shape into a draft plan containing alternative approaches to resolving the issues.

Public participation has been strong, starting with the appointment of a broadly based 15 member Advisory Committee in early 1977 whose sessions have been used as public forums for comment and advice in its eight meetings to date. Public interest has been solicited through radio and TV announcements, and public opinion surveyed through national and regional polls.

Critical interim management efforts have included the deployment of a small but well trained uniformed Desert Ranger force. They are enforcing resource protection compliance and providing emergency visitor aid. A dunes system has been closed to vehicles to protect endangered plant species. Construction on segments of the Pacific Crest Trail within the Desert is underway. One visitor center is in full operation and construction of a second center will start soon. An EIS on a major high potential geothermal area has been started

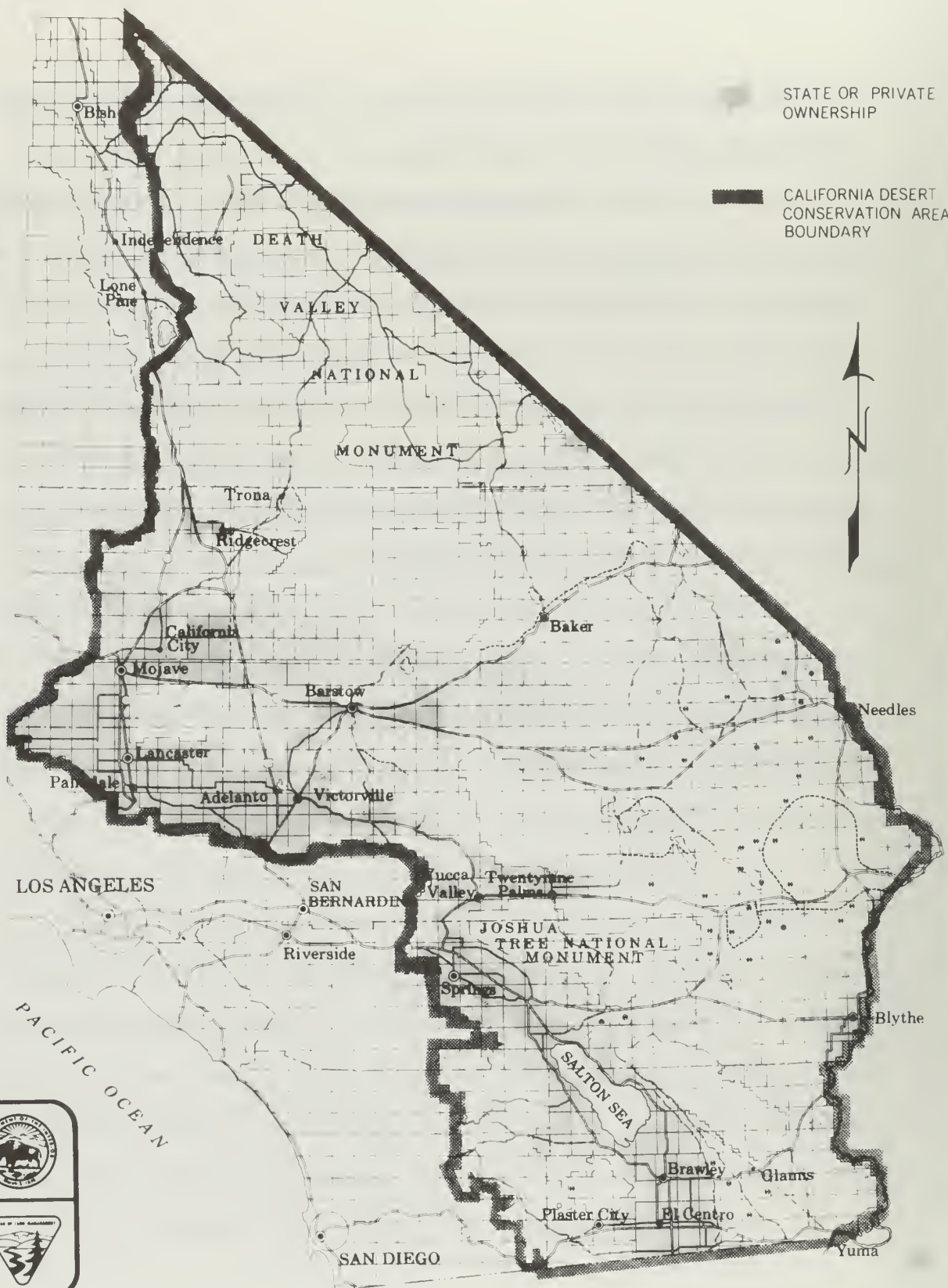
and other major energy transmission projects are being handled with individual EIS efforts as applications are received.

No insurmountable problems are foreseen at this point. Funding appropriations under the \$40 million FLPMA authorization have been adequate with some adjustment of internal BLM priorities to channel money to the Desert effort. It is important that interim management appropriations be kept adequate through FY-80 and FY-81 as the needs to protect desert resources are unending.

There has been a problem with the Bureau's own slow start in developing mining and surface protection regulations under Section 601 of FLPMA, but such regulations should be ready for issuance.

If there is any problem at present, it is one of adequate time to do a massive task in a quality manner. The BLM is coping well with this to date and will continue to apply itself to meeting the responsibility assigned it by Congress in the time it has been allotted.

California Desert Conservation Area



INTRODUCTION

Section 601 of Title VI of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)(43 U.S.C. 1701, 1781) designated approximately 25 million acres in southern California as the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA).

Subsection (d) directs the Secretary of the Interior to

...prepare and implement a comprehensive, long-range plan for the management, use, development, and protection of the public lands within the California Desert Conservation Area. Such plan shall take into account the principles of multiple use and sustained yield in providing for resource use and development, including, but not limited to, maintenance of environmental quality, rights-of-way, and mineral development. Such plan shall be completed and implementation thereof initiated on or before September 30, 1980.

Subsection (e) directs that, during the period between implementation of the Act (October 21, 1976) and the effective date of implementation of the comprehensive, long-range plan, the Secretary of the Interior shall

...execute an interim program to manage, use, and protect the public lands, and their resources now in danger of destruction, in the California Desert Conservation Area, to provide for the public use of such lands in an orderly and reasonable manner such as through the development of campgrounds and visitor centers, and to provide for uniformed desert ranger force.

Subsection (f) directs the establishment of reasonable mining regulations by the Secretary of the Interior; states that any patent issued on any mining claim within the CDCA shall be subject to such regulations; and further directs,

...Such regulations shall provide for such measures as may be reasonable to protect the scenic, scientific, and environmental values of the public lands of the California Desert Conservation Area against undue impairment, and to assure against pollution of the streams and waters within the California Desert Conservation Area.

Subsection (g) directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish a California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee within 60 days after approval of the Act, and further directs,

...It shall be the function of the advisory committee to advise the Secretary with respect to the preparation and implementation of the comprehensive, long-range plan required under subsection (d) of this section.

Subsection (i) further directs that the Secretary of the Interior

...shall report to the Congress no later than two years after the date of approval of this Act (October 21, 1976), and annually thereafter, on the progress in, and any problems concerning, the implementation of this section, together with any recommendations, which he may deem necessary, to remedy such problems.

This document is the first Progress Report required by Section 601(i).

For facility of reading, this report has been divided into three parts: The first, a progress report on development of the comprehensive management plan; the second, a status report on interim management actions being taken within the California Desert Conservation Area; and the third, a brief description of problems confronting the Bureau in its interim management of the CDCA.

Part I discusses major issues and conflicts; the selected planning and EIS processes, including establishment of a multidisciplinary team of professionals and technicians to develop and prepare the desert-wide management plan and the EIS; a description of the resource inventory program for establishment of a data base for the decision-making process; identification of the role played by the California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee; current status of the public participation and public involvement aspects of the program; and

a description of current implementation problems and proposed remedies.

Part II of this report treats the Interim Management Programs currently being carried out by the two Bureau of Land Management (BLM) District Offices (Riverside and Bakersfield) whose geographical boundaries encompass lands within the California Desert Conservation Area.

Part III discusses briefly two problems concerning interim management of the CDCA: mining regulations; and funding of planning for and interim management of the CDCA.

It is important to note that, from an acreage standpoint, the Conservation Area designated by Congress is equal to one-fourth the land surface of the State of California. For that reason, particular attention and close coordination has been effected with the State of California and with local governmental agencies within the CDCA boundaries. Consultation and coordination documentation in this respect is being conducted and will be available as an appendix to the Final Report to Congress on September 30, 1980.

PART I

CALIFORNIA DESERT PLAN

MAJOR ISSUES AND CONFLICTS

The California Desert Conservation Area contains numerous resources and uses which often conflict with one another. In some cases, however, properly applied management can achieve a harmonious balance for multiple public use. On one hand, the Desert is an ideal "getaway" spot for the urban dweller's burden of steel and concrete confinement. On the other, the Desert is a storehouse of minerals, flora, fauna, energy, and artifacts of man's historic and pre-historic occupation. Planning, management, or regulation of the area immediately and automatically bring these issues and conflicts to the forefront, requiring in-depth study to obtain balanced solutions.

MOTORIZED VEHICULAR ACTIVITY

Vehicular use on the California Desert can be subdivided into two broad categories: (1) off-road activity (cross-country travel) engaged in by motorcycles, dune buggies, four-wheel drive vehicles, and (2) on-trail or road travel engaged in primarily by four-wheel drive vehicles, but also by motorcycles.

The issue centers around off-road travel which has become a popular form of recreation over the years throughout California, but particularly in southern California. Cross-country travelers on ORVs fall into three groups, based on their objectives. The first group uses vehicles primarily as transportation so they can engage in certain activities--fishing, hunting, rock-hounding, photography, hiking, birdwatching, etc. The second group is primarily interested in getting to remote and scenic places in order to enjoy the landscape. Individuals in the third group are primarily interested in their vehicles as ends in

themselves; their pleasure is derived from the performance of their machines and in their skill in handling and maintaining their vehicles.

Competitive events, such as cross-country races, have attracted a relatively stable and enthusiastic following. Until implementation of the Bureau's Interim Critical Management Plan for Vehicular Use of the California Desert in November 1973, such activity had been unrestrained by Federal regulation. Since that time, regulations have increased; some areas have been closed to all travel and others limited to travel on designated roads and trails to protect fragile areas from degradation. The management program has generated heated controversy over off-road vehicle (ORV) use.

Proponents of ORV use claim that only a small percentage of private individuals operating unilaterally cause most of the problems associated with off-road vehicular recreation; that the organizational recreationist is bound by the terms and conditions of his group. They also maintain that reasonable rules of conduct, along with a commitment by the Bureau to an educational program, is the best long-term solution to the problem of existing and potential damage to the desert terrain, flora, and fauna.

Opponents, on the other hand, point to damage to natural resources caused by vehicles. These views originate principally in environmentally oriented organizations as well as in universities and news media, and caution against damage to soils, plants, animals, degradation of visual quality, and noise. They urge the Bureau to prohibit most of the cross-country vehicular activity within the Conservation Area or, at least, to limit such activity to low-impact areas where ORV activity can be supervised and regulated.

One of the great attractions of the California Desert is the freedom to roam the many rough, unmaintained back-country roads with specialized vehicles expressly equipped for such use. In addition, many other forms of recreation utilize four-wheel-drive vehicles for access: photography, rockhounding, and visiting archaeological and historic sites. Advocates point out that use of the existing road network is essential to almost all forms of desert recreation and that limitation or reduction in the form of road closure would have an adverse effect on their recreation opportunities.

Meanwhile, those who oppose cross-country vehicular traffic in the Desert, and favor controlling and limiting access, claim that the Desert is too accessible now and that, for full enjoyment of solitude and for protection of fragile resources, certain areas should be closed to off-road traffic. They also feel that certain highly sensitive ecological and cultural areas are best protected through limiting access to foot traffic only.

UTILITY CORRIDORS AND POWERPLANT SITINGS

Currently, 23 percent of southern California's power crosses the California Desert in utility corridors from generating plant sources in other States. In addition to this electrical power transmission, other major rights-of-way have been granted in the Desert for delivery of natural gas and petroleum; for domestic water supply in the southern counties; and for transcontinental communications cables and transportation routes.

The California Desert is also considered a favorable location for energy production sites such as nuclear powerplants, geothermal development, solar

energy collectors, and coal-fired powerplants. The Conservation Area is already traversed in many places by electrical transmission lines and gas and oil pipelines. Others are either under application or are proposed for construction.

Logical locations for corridors which can support acceptable energy production and transmission across the Desert Conservation Area need to be considered and developed. Transportation corridors, such as railways and highways, will also be considered where appropriate.

Those who oppose the proliferation of utility lines point out that uncontrolled and indiscriminate placement of power lines, cables, and aqueducts conflicts with protection of the scenic, environmental, historic, archaeological, biological, and recreation values of the desert.

Section 503 of FLPMA provides for the utilization of rights-of-way in common to the extent practical to avoid such proliferation in the future. In recent years, utility companies themselves have shown an increasing willingness to cooperate with local, State and Federal agencies in planning for major transmission facilities. They point out, however, that costs resulting from added miles of line for pipe and for special treatments to reduce environmental and visual impacts must all be added to the cost of a project, with the added costs borne by the public in the form of higher utility rates.

The California Desert Plan will consider both perspectives through identification of sensitive areas which should be avoided and through FLPMA's concept of utility corridors to be used by more than one company, or for more than one purpose.

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Mining Law of 1872 provided small prospectors, miners, and mining companies with opportunities to find and develop a vast range of rich mineral deposits on the public lands. Although these operations utilize less than one percent of the acreage of the Desert in current operations, the dollar value of the production accounted for over 50 percent of California's total mineral production, excluding petroleum, for 1977. California ranks third in the Nation in mineral production.

The mining issue basically revolves around the pros and cons of uncontrolled rights to prospect, explore, and discover new deposits and to establish rights to future development of those deposits without restoration. They propose that high-value sensitive areas be withdrawn from mineral entry and closed to future development of those deposits without government interference.

Those in opposition to current mining practices point to the free, unrestricted rights which prospectors have had to the land: the rights to dig, trench, drill, and eventually abandon the land without restoration. They propose that high-value sensitive areas be withdrawn from mineral entry and closed to mining activity in all forms.

The mining community however, generally opposes any action by the Bureau, or any other agency, which limits exploration and prospecting on public lands. They point to the national need for minerals and contend that demand will increase, requiring source location through on-the-ground exploration. They are opposed to establishment of withdrawals or additional wilderness, pointing out

that a very large percentage of the public lands in this country has already been withdrawn from mineral entry.

The issue the Desert Plan must address, therefore, is how much withdrawal from mineral entry and how much control of mineral exploration and development should be exercised on given areas.

PUBLIC LAND VS. PRIVATE AND MILITARY NEEDS

Land ownership in parts of the California Desert is patterned like a patchwork quilt, with public and private land often intermingled. Those public lands laying near desert communities generally receive the heaviest through recreation, weekend mining or prospecting, and periodic grazing. Conflicts between the community, individuals, and BLM often arise out of the complex problems associated with unrestricted use of open space surrounding these desert communities.

Over three million acres of the California Desert are managed by the Department of Defense. This area, representing one-sixth of the Federal land ownership, is used for military bases, proving grounds, and bombing ranges. Recently, the Air Force published a draft EIS on Milestone II of its MX missile system proposal. This underground missile system could constrain public use on nearly two million acres of the CDCA. At issue is how much public land should be reserved for military use.

GRAZING

The California Desert provides forage utilized by livestock, increasing herds of feral horses and burros, and native wildlife. There are approximately

30 cow/calve operations utilizing three million acres of land, and intermittent grazing by sheep is permitted when forage is available. In 1977, the California Desert was used for grazing 30,000 sheep and 9,000 cattle with a \$2 million market value.

Those concerned about livestock grazing on the Desert point to the devastation created by overgrazing. Too little forage and too many cattle and sheep, they contend, have denuded the Desert of natural vegetation; have adversely affected the Desert's ecology; have caused soil erosion; and have created unsightly conditions in what would otherwise have been scenic areas. The opponents also criticize the grazing of sheep herds near desert communities, saying it creates dust conditions in the spring months and destroys outstanding displays of desert flowers.

Ranchers, on the other hand, point to the historic use of desert acreage for grazing and submit that degradation of vegetation has not been caused by livestock grazing but by recreationists and collectors, and people who take desert vegetation for criminal purposes. They also contend that conversion of otherwise unusable desert shrubs and grasses to protein and to animal food and fiber is a natural use of desert vegetation. The ranchers also point out that, as part of their operation, they maintain roads which are used by recreationists and, in providing water for their livestock, also provide benefits for wildlife.

WILD BURROS AND HORSES

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (16 U.S.C. 1331) mandates

that the Bureau protect these feral animals and manage them as a component of the public lands. Recent inventories indicate that an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 burros roam over about 2.5 million acres within the CDCA. In addition, there are about 400 to 600 wild horses on about one million acres of desert land. The presence of these animals on the desert adds to the high recreational values found in this area. However, the increasing numbers of burros has led to heavy grazing of vegetation and concentration around scarce water sources, resulting in degradation of the natural ecology of these areas.

In an effort to reduce the numbers of feral burros and to improve the ecology of these vital spring areas, the Bureau has developed the "Adopt-A-Burro" program. This program has met with such public acceptance that the Bureau has received many more applications for burros than it has been able to fill.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Protection and preservation of the unique and irreplaceable natural resources within the Conservation Area has a high priority in the public's view. The list of public interest factors includes vegetation, wildlife, cultural values, scenic quality, unique soils and geologic formations, clarity and purity of air, and scarce water supplies. The study of cultural resources provides insight into the development of human values and gives us a greater awareness of our human heritage.

Damage to extremely fragile cultural sites and ecosystems has been caused by a number of factors. Vandalism and destruction in recent years have created

irretrievable losses and resulted in widespread public demands that something be done to protect the Desert from the onslaught of uncontrolled recreation activity.

Ancient Native American rock art has been defaced in many areas. In some instances, examples have actually been cut out and carted away by collectors. Unique geologic formations and highly sensitive desert pavement areas have been exposed to heavy recreation traffic, leaving highly visible scars which are slow to heal. Some scars, however, are of historic value. Settlers' wagon tracks, as well as tank tracks from General George S. Patton's World War II maneuvers, are still visible. General Patton's camp has been found eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Disrupted wildlife habitats and unique stands of vegetation have been impacted, even destroyed, by increased human use and vandalism. The BLM has had to limit vehicular traffic on several desert areas to avoid impact on and direct destruction of threatened and endangered plants and animals which are protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act. Scenic vistas, in many cases, have been degraded in quality through the introduction of manmade intrusions, such as powerlines and roads.

In general the public tends to agree on the need for protection of the Desert's natural values. The issue centers on exactly what type of protection is needed. Many organizations and individuals favor strong regulations and enforcement by the Bureau as the best means of protecting highly valued resource areas. They also stress the need for reduced accessibility to critical

areas, and reduced Bureau emphasis on attracting concentrations of recreationists through the establishment of public campgrounds.

Other organizations and individuals contend that the same purposes could be accomplished if the Bureau were to encourage and support programs to educate the public and create an awareness and sensitivity concerning the fragile nature of the California Desert. According to this group, peer pressure is the real key to controlling misuse and misconduct on the Desert and is more effective and less costly in the long run than the regulatory/enforcement process.

WILDERNESS

Section 603 of FLPMA requires inventory of the public lands administered by the BLM for determination of roadless islands, or roadless tracts of 5,000 acres or more, having wilderness characteristics as listed in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. After these Wilderness Study Areas are identified, FLPMA further directs that they be studied to determine their suitability or non-suitability for designation as Wilderness and that the recommendation be reported through the Secretary of the Interior and the President to the Congress. Only Congress can designate areas as Wilderness. In the interim, until Congress makes a determination, all Wilderness Study Areas must be managed in accordance with the restrictions imposed by Section 603 of FLPMA.

Opponents of wilderness envision vast areas of the California Desert Conservation Area being locked away from present public use and assigned solely to wilderness-type access. Continuing free access and active use of

desert resources is of major importance to miners, ranchers, and vehicular-oriented recreationists using motorcycles, dune buggies, and four-wheel-drive vehicles. This group perceives wilderness as an effort by the Bureau to "lock up the desert."

Wilderness proponents, such as the environmental and conservation groups, want to ensure that large sections of the Desert are considered for wilderness or other appropriate management designation to preserve examples of the desert environment and avoid the impacts resulting from vehicular traffic and other consumptive uses in sensitive areas.

Public input has been actively solicited and used during wilderness inventory in the California Desert in order to identify Wilderness Study Areas which will be studied in detail during the planning process for the Conservation Area. Every effort is being made to explain the relationship between the Desert Plan and the Wilderness Program, and to allow public involvement at each step. During Plan preparation, the identified Wilderness Study Areas will be evaluated along with other resources and land-use recommendations withⁱⁿ the context of the planning process. For example: the wilderness values of Wilderness Study Areas will be assessed along with other recommenda^tions for the same geographic area for heavy recreation use, mining, grazing, possible extension or installation of a utility corridor, energy production, critical wildlife habitat protection, cultural resources protection, and all the other values and potential uses.

Along with other management decisions, the plan will include recommendations as to the suitability or unsuitability for wilderness designation of each identified Wilderness Study Area.

THE PLANNING AND EIS PROCESS

The Desert Planning Staff was established in 1972 under the aegis of the BLM California State Director and is located at Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offices in Riverside, California. The multidisciplinary staff includes planners and specialists trained in natural resources fields, including geology, minerals, energy, botany, biology, zoology, agriculture, cultural anthropology and archaeology, recreation, soils, and air and water quality. Support is provided by administrative and clerical personnel, as well as graphic artists, map-makers, and data processors.

The Desert Planning Staff had begun developing a California Desert Plan before the 1976 Act was passed. Land and resource use plans called "management framework plans" had been completed for three planning units, and intensive inventories were underway in two others. The total planning acreage includes several areas where public lands administered by BLM are intermingled with other ownerships which must be included in inventory and planning. The initial intensive planning program covered about 4.6 million acres, leaving approximately 12 million acres to be completed.

The deadline established by FLPMA required a shift from unit-by-unit planning to a broader approach that considers the entire Desert. In addition to conventional methodologies, such techniques as satellite imagery and remote sensing are also developing inventory data for the California

Desert Plan. Separate resource inventory data are stored in computers for efficient retrieval and analysis. Socioeconomic elements of the plan focus on desert population, sources of income and employment, and the economics of such activities as livestock grazing, mineral-energy production, agriculture, recreation, the military, and education and research. The Planning Staff is developing a series of "alternative futures," which are based on the concept that, although the future cannot be predicted, it can be anticipated. These "alternative futures" will consider potential emerging forces in the CDCA to provide a vehicle for long-range planning. Issues to be addressed under this concept include: solar energy; increasing population and urbanization; use of the Desert as a takeoff and landing area for space exploration; proposed agricultural development to increase world supplies; and proposed use of dry desert lakebeds as disposal sites for toxic wastes. Transportation, power transmission corridors, and energy development sites are other issues that will be considered.

Development of a comprehensive land use map for the California Desert Conservation Area was an initial requirement before further planning could be plotted or properly assigned to specific disciplines. Although the Conservation Area covers 25 million acres, not all of the land is under the jurisdiction of, or administered by, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the assigned planning agency. The BLM's management responsibilities cover 12.5 million acres of the total CDCA. The National Park Service administers some 2.5 million acres, including Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments. Military lands administered by the Department of Defense equal 3 million acres, including the contaminated

area containing unexploded munitions remaining from World War II training exercises. Approximately one million acres are under the ownership of the State of California in the form of "school lands," awarded to the State by the United States at the time statehood was granted, and designated State park lands. Another one million acres are owned by Southern Pacific Railroad, in the "checkerboard" pattern of 19th century grants for the development of transcontinental railroad systems. The remainder of the 25-million-acre Conservation Area includes Indian lands, both tribal and individual, under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and about six million acres of privately owned property.

Once land ownership had been identified, the next step was to establish and recognize the critical planning issues that would be affected by past and present laws and policies governing management of Federal lands and related, or adjoining, acreage.

Development of a comprehensive land use map required an investigation of present land uses within the Conservation Area, along with studied projections as to what kinds of uses might develop in the future as a result of population changes, increased transportation capabilities, and even the future availability or desire for additional leisure time. Consideration was also given to the attractiveness of such a large geographic area for development, transmission, and storage of energy.

Opinion polls were taken within the Desert itself, as well as on state-wide and national bases, to try and determine: (1) what people wanted to use the Desert for; (2) what people did and did not like to see in the Desert; and (3) what people felt were the important issues regarding the Desert.

From this information began a planning process that would reflect present and possible future supply as well as present and future demand, in an effort to develop a mechanism that would balance these factors. Allocation of lands and resources, however, could not proceed without a thorough knowledge of available supply; i.e., resources on hand, as well as future probabilities. Such a process involves first, a comprehensive resource inventory, to an extent which has never before been undertaken in the designated Conservation Area; then, a determination of alternatives and trade-off possibilities; and finally evaluation and resolution of major conflicts.

Concurrent with the planning process is the development of an environmental impact statement which will meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for assessing the impacts of such a major proposed Federal action as development of a land use plan for 12 million acres of public lands in the CDCA.

The EIS will use resource data developed as the foundation for the comprehensive desert-wide management plan by the Desert Planning Staff.

A starting point for the environmental statement will be a description of the existing environment, as well as projections concerning future environment. This portion should be completed by the end of this year and will lead into the evaluation phase, based on resource studies of various supply and demand factors, both now and in the future.

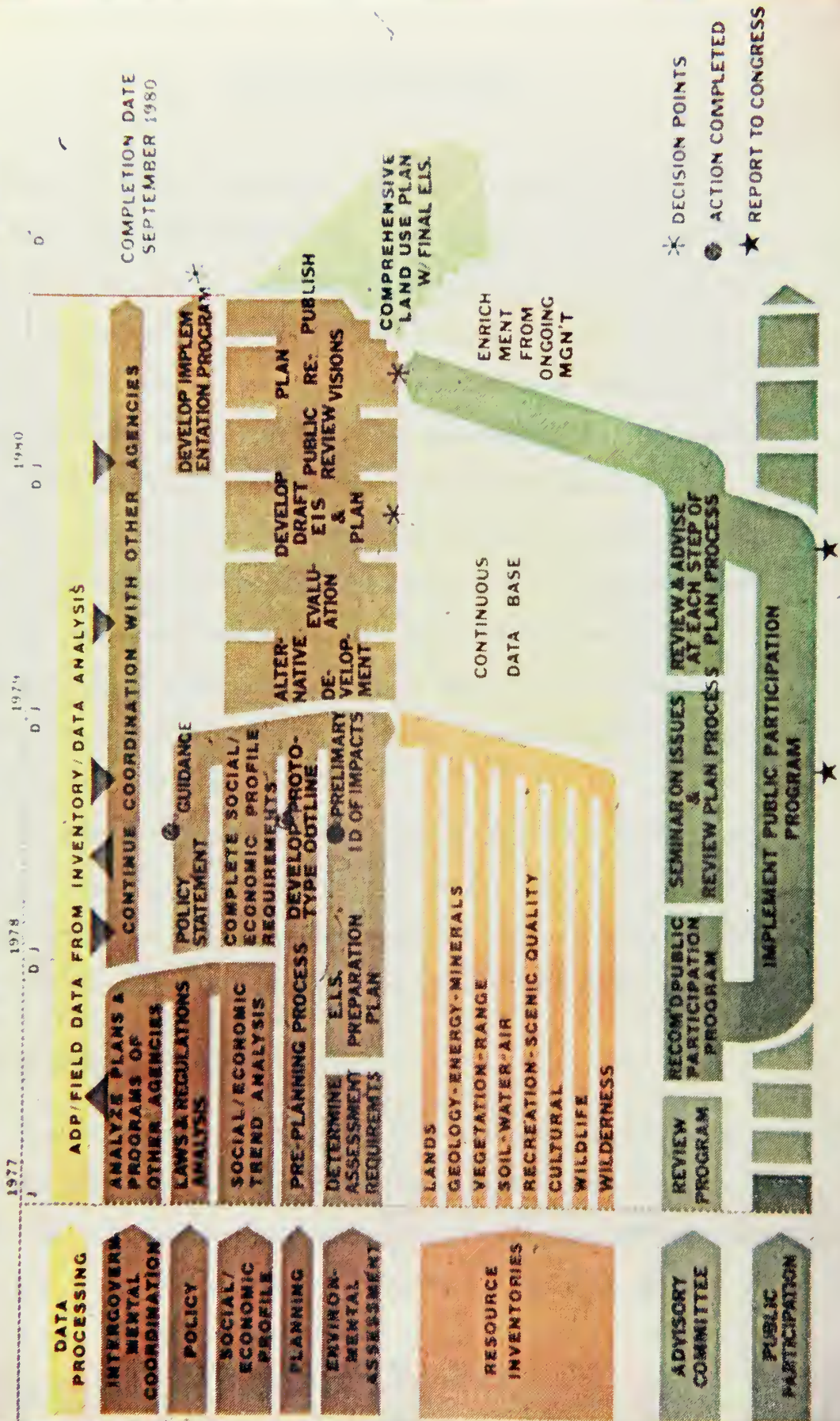
As alternative uses are developed, each will be explored as to direct or secondary and indirect impacts; possible mitigation measures; irreversible trends or restoration capability; severity of impact; and the estimated

economic effects of proposed actions. Other discussions will include an evaluation of trade-offs, unavoidable adverse effects, irreversible commitments of identified resources, and the effect that short-term uses would have on long-term productivity.

The Draft EIS is scheduled to be published in January 1980, along with publication of the Draft Desert Plan, so that both can receive the public review and comment necessary to production of a final environmental statement and the Final Desert Plan by September 30, 1980, for submission to Congress as part of the decision-making process.

The following page contains a detailed flow chart of the planning and EIS processes depicting decision points and completed actions to date, as well as future actions to September 30, 1980.

CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA PLANNING PROGRAM



RESOURCE INVENTORIES

Basic to the development of a long-range, comprehensive land-use plan for the California Desert Conservation Area is a first-hand knowledge of desert resources; both existing and potential. Thus, the first requisite was to compile detailed inventory of past, existing, and future resource data. Although small and scattered inventories had been made in the past (of specific items, and for specific limited purposes), no comprehensive inventory of desert-wide resources had ever been undertaken.

New concepts and new techniques were developed by BLM for the desert-wide inventory, which is on schedule and will be completed in February 1979. Because of time constraints, much of the required inventory had to be done through contractual sources. To date, 141 contracts have been awarded, for a total of \$1,970,755. Of these, 75 contracts have been completed and 66 are still in progress.

*well,
"Basically."*

For inventory purposes, resources were divided into eight disciplines: range and vegetation; recreation; geology, energy, and minerals; wildlife; socio-economic and land use; cultural resources; soil/water/air; and wilderness. Each resource element is more fully described in the following paragraphs.

RANGE AND VEGETATION

New and innovative methods have been devised for and applied to: surveying and mapping of vegetation and determining and measuring the parameters within which desert vegetation grows and reproduces successfully; as well as its response to impacts from various activities (e.g., grazing, vehicle use). Inventory of present vegetation and its condition and trend provides a basis for predicting future conditions.

The entire California Desert Conservation Area includes approximately 150 habitat types, including Joshua tree, woodland, creosote, grassland, willow, riparian, oak, silktassel, California buckwheat, golden brush, and burro brush, which support a variety of wildlife species. Some habitat types are very limited in size and encompass less than 150 acres. Others are more widespread and extend to adjoining states as well.

To help describe the continuously changing nature of the desert ecosystems, the historic and prehistoric presettlement vegetation aspects are being described, using established scientific methods. Characterization of the desert's climate, macrofossil (Carbon-14) dating, and review of historic documents are examples of ongoing studies of the dynamics of desert vegetation.

A perspective of the flora of the Conservation Area, as it exists in various herberia, as described in pertinent written floras, and as verified through specimens collected by the Desert Planning Staff and BLM contractors is nearing completion. A capsulized life history profile for each plant classification in the Conservation area, with date and site specific information for all rare, threatened, and endangered species, is being provided. Data on plants in the conservation area is being stored in the computer system and will be readily retrievable.

Special precautionary measures will be taken to guard the 133 endangered, threatened, and rare plant species discovered in the Conservation Area. Two of the species have been officially listed by the California Native Plant Society: Oenothera avita eurekaensis and Swallenia alexandrae.

Vegetation survey and mapping phases are the largest and most complex segments of the Range and Vegetation program. This phase will provide managers and planners with immensely valuable and readily usable data. Estimates can be furnished on a desert-wide scale as to what, and how much, vegetation actually occurs in any given spot. The most complex and the most promising portion of the vegetation survey and mapping phase is the LANDSAT digital classification (a satellite photo mapping technique). Related land vegetation data are being generated, using permanent large-scale photo transects and actual ground-truthing transects.

Another phase of the Range and Vegetation program is plant response parameters. Ongoing studies are being conducted to determine how plants and plant communities react to impacts caused by man and his enterprises. Special consideration is given to describing the life histories of selected rare, threatened, and endangered species. Planning and management authorities will be able to use the data supplied to predict the response of a given plant community or species to a proposed action.

RECREATION

Field inventories for recreation and visual resources have been completed for 12.5 million acres of the California Desert Conservation Area. Scenic quality evaluations have been completed. An on-site survey of desert recreation use is more than 90 percent completed.

An extensive recreation literature review has been completed. Key contacts have been made with other public agencies and private suppliers of outdoor recreation in the Desert and neighboring areas. An intensive supply/demand study of desert recreation is underway.

Major consultant studies have been completed, including: (1) State and national public opinion surveys on desert values; (2) development of a carrying capacity methodology for recreational planning in the California Desert; (3) study of literature regarding outdoor recreation psycho-social needs; (4) study of teaching and research in the California Desert; (5) a study of organized recreation group use; and (6) history of recreation in the California Desert.

Individual recreation activity analyses have been completed for a number of recreation activities, including hunting, equestrian use, bird-watching, and camping.

An interpretive resource analysis is 70 percent completed and includes some 500-700 recreation sites which have been identified and analyzed.

Methodologies for compilation, analysis of visitor use in the desert, and quality evaluations of recreation resource potential are being developed for use with the overall recreational carrying capacity model.

GEOLOGY, ENERGY, AND MINERALS (GEM)

To emphasize the importance of minerals within the Conservation Area, it should be noted that the resource produces \$445 million annually, or 50 percent of all mineral production in California, excluding petroleum. The total United States output of boron comes from lands within the CDCA, as well as 97 percent of the Nation's rare earth production; 15 percent of the country's talc supply; and 5 percent of the U.S. iron ore production.

To evaluate these resources, an inventory program was initiated to utilize existing data and collect new data through sophisticated scientific methods. In the first phase, a lineament and a geostatistical study to identify potential mineralized areas were completed through private contracts. With the cooperation of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), a mineral sampling program was conducted involving 2500 stream sediment samples which will be tested for the presence of 62 elements. The Conservation Division of USGS initiated a program to identify areas with potential for leasable minerals, while the U.S. Bureau of Mines contributed computerized data. At the same time, field data verification was conducted by the Desert Planning Staff.

The results of the first phase are being used to select smaller areas for more intensified study, requiring more detailed work at a higher level of confidence. In this second phase, work being done by outside contractors as well as in-house staff consists of integrated remote sensing and on-the-ground work.

From these studies, areas with the highest potential for mineral development will be identified.

WILDLIFE

To date, over 100 contracts for field and literature wildlife studies, and over 20 staff projects have been undertaken. Innovative methods have been established to identify and record wildlife populations in the Conservation Area, and existing data have been gathered.

Meetings have been held with BLM biologists at Area, District, and State Office levels; with the California State Department of Fish and Game; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and with other local and State officials to coordinate the project design. Contributions were also received from wildlife scientists in the academic community.

All wildlife inventory projects have involved four basic subjects: (1) gathering existing data in the form of museum records, sight observations and compilation of annotated bibliographies on key species and important topics; (2) field surveys of significant species; (3) analysis of wildlife habitats by type and conditions; and (4) special studies on the effects of recreation, urbanization, livestock grazing, and other land uses on wildlife species and habitats.

Using these methods, several important wildlife discoveries have been made. An isolated population of dusky-footed wood rats was discovered in the Granite Mountains near Kelso, over 100 miles from previously known populations in the San Bernardino Mountains. The Mojave ground squirrel's range was found to extend over 40 miles east of previously determined limits, and the Inyo slender salamander was discovered in several areas where it had not previously been known to occur. The Yuma clapper rail, which is normally associated with the Colorado River, was discovered near Barstow. Pond turtles, once thought to be eliminated from the Afton Canyon area, were rediscovered. A survey of raptor areas in the Conservation Area resulted in location of 80 known or newly discovered Golden Eagle eyries as well as 180 for the Prairie Falcon. Many of the new eyries were located through the use of helicopters.

The following species appearing on the Federal threatened or endangered list have been located in the California Desert: Mojave chub, Yuma clapper rail, southern bald eagle, and desert slender salamander. Also located were the following species appearing on the California State rare and endangered list: Mojave ground squirrel, California blackrail, Peninsular big horn sheep, yellow-billed cuckoo, and black toad. Searches for two other State-listed species within the desert confines -- the Kern Canyon slender salamander and the Tehachapi slender salamander -- have been conducted.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS AND LAND USE

Accomplishments to date include a current land use inventory of the Desert Conservation Area, as well as historic land use from pre-European contact to the present. Legal and administrative land inventories have been made, including withdrawals, segregations, and classifications.

Populations and economic base profiles from 1940 to the present have been completed, along with a profile of trends to the year 2000. Second-home and recreation property markets have been investigated and tabulated insofar as possible.

Coordination with all major utility companies to determine future land needs has been integrated into the "alternative futures" profile. Contacts have been made with large land management agencies, e.g., National Park Service, Department of Defense, State of California, Southern Pacific Railroad, to determine problems and issues with respect to land use planning. Coordination has been effected with the State of California concerning solid waste disposal site proposals and plans; energy issues; and possible land exchanges to develop manageable integrated parcels.

Local government plans and programs have been reviewed and analyzed to determine possible effects on Federal lands and the possible effect that Federal plans might have on local planning. A special study of viable management strategies for solving the Desert Conservation Area's particular checkerboard ownership problems is underway.

Coordination with State and local government agencies is continuous, with particular stress on water supply and waste management practices in urban communities that could have impacts on the Desert.

A series of published social indicators with respect to the Area's human population has been prepared, and an opinion poll taken of desert residents regarding needs and desires for environmental quality and management of public lands.

An inventory and assessment of institutional values within the Conservation Area, with respect to environmental quality and public land management, is being made, including contact with the local political leadership to achieve a more complete evaluation.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources can be defined as those fragile and non-renewable evidences of human activity, occupancy, and endeavor which are reflected in archaeological districts, sites, structures, artifacts, objects, ruins, works of art, architecture, and natural features of importance to human historic or prehistoric events. Cultural resources also include those areas of religious, ceremonial, or mythological importance to Native Americans even though no tangible remains may be present.

There are very few areas of the California Desert Conservation Area which do not show evidence of prehistoric or historic human activity. The Planning Staff, over the last 2-3 years, has discovered approximately 2,500 archaeological and historic sites, less than 1 percent of which are rock art sites. These Indian petroglyphs range in age up to 10,000 years.

Encampments and rock art locations have been discovered on mountain tops and in caves, while intaglios or desert pavement figures have been found up and down the terraces of the Colorado River. At one site, near an 1870's abandoned mining town, polychrome cave paintings were discovered in vivid colors of orange, red, black, grey, white, and yellow. The mineral pigments in the colors have been dated back about 150 years. The paintings may have been produced by Indians who worked at the mines in the area.

In other areas, intaglios up to 200 feet long have been discovered in the desert pavement. No one knows the true purpose of the intaglios, but since they can best be discerned from the air, they have been interpreted as possible religious "gifts" to a spiritual power. Indications have been found throughout the Desert of Early Man sites and aboriginal settlements.

The cultural resource element of the planning process has been developed to synthesize regional archaeological, ethnographical, and historical data; to outline past and projected research; and to identify research and management questions and needs.

Four overviews are currently in progress. The first is for western Inyo County and part of Mono County encompassing Eureka, Saline, Panamint, and lower Owens Valleys and interlying ranges (90% completed). The second overview will cover eastern Inyo County and portions of San Bernardino

County, including the entire Lake Mohave-Amargosa River system and adjoining regions (90% completed). The two additional overviews encompass the Colorado Desert and western Mojave Desert respectively (50% completed).

A one percent systematic inventory of the El Paso region of eastern Kern County resulted in the recordation of 83 cultural resources sites; in the adjoining Red Mountain region, 67 sites were recorded. The sample survey of the East Mojave area resulted in the discovery of 324 sites. Systematic reconnaissance of the Saline Valley/Inyo Mountain region recorded 181 archaeological and historical sites.

The archaeological investigation in the Yuha Desert region of eastern San Diego and Imperial Counties yielded 171 sites. Systematic survey within Panamint Valley and surrounding ranges resulted in 101 cultural locations being recorded, while in the adjoining Darwin Valley region, 130 sites were discovered. A sample of the Eureka Valley region resulted in the discovery of 73 sites. The BLM also completed investigations in the Whipple Mountains and the Big Maria and Pichacho regions where a one percent inventory has yielded approximately 250 cultural sites.

In addition, Native Americans are presently being interviewed to solicit their ideas and concerns, especially with regard to the identification and preservation of sacred or traditional areas.

Small contracts on the history of mining in the California Desert and archival research into historic documents are in progress (90% completed).

SOIL - WATER - AIR

SOIL: To this date, the soils program has inventoried approximately 4.5 million acres, or about 20 percent of the California Desert Conservation Area. This inventory has been conducted to specifications of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

Evaluation of the soils will be determined by using data from the BLM study along with imagery from the LANDSAT study. The soil inventories completed will be used to identify soil types and determine soil characteristics, after verifying LANDSAT data with low-level aerial photo study plots. Other inventories completed are landform types and sand dunes location and classification conducted by the University of California at Riverside.

Soil studies on the impact of four-wheel drive vehicles, motorcycles, and man on the soil have been conducted during 1977-78. This study relates the various impacts on soil moisture as well as degree of impact after multiple passes and its relationship or effects of these impacts on soil moisture and vegetation. A study to determine threshold velocities of disturbed and undisturbed soils and their relationship to wind erosion susceptibility was conducted. A portable wind tunnel machine developed by the National Center of Atmospheric Research was used for this study. A study of the possible presence in the Desert of valley fever fungus (Coccidioides immitis) is being conducted by Arizona State University. All studies will be completed by the end of 1978.

WATER: U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resource Division, has completed an initial study which included the delineation of drainage and ground-water basins and the plotting of all stream-gauging stations, precipitation stations,

selected water wells that have been monitored for water-level changes or sampled for water-quality determinations, and selected springs. General studies on surface waters and imported water have been conducted by BLM, and areas of potential flood hazards have been delineated throughout the Area.

AIR: The air quality inventory being developed for the California Desert is directed to three distinct areas: (1) air pollution; fugitive dust and sand storms; and (3) wind and solar power potential.

Air pollution contracts have been let to compile data on existing California Desert Conservation Area air pollution levels and to assemble all available meteorological data. In coordination with State and local air pollution agencies, field studies are in progress to develop a climatology and air pollution potential and to supplement the existing data base with aerial monitoring studies. These studies will be completed by December 1978 for use in the planning process.

In the area of fugitive dust and sand storms, several in-house studies are in progress to investigate the problem of dust generated by off-road vehicles. By the end of 1978, data developed in these studies will enable BLM air quality planners to predict the air quality impact of off-road vehicle activities in potential use areas.

Wind and solar power may someday represent viable commercial sources of energy in the Desert. This possibility is being evaluated by a contracted study to characterize and rank those areas within the Desert where wind and solar resource potentials are maximized. The entire air quality planning effort is being fully coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency and state and local air quality agencies.

WILDERNESS

Public lands in the California Desert Conservation Area are being inventoried for the characteristics presented in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964: (1) an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man; (2) an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation; (3) an area which generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (4) an area which has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and confined type of recreation; (5) an area which has at least 5,000 acres of land, or is of sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (6) an area which may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Wilderness Inventory Program in the California Desert began in May 1978 and is scheduled for completion in February 1979. Completion of the California Desert Plan, September 30, 1980, will result in recommendations on those areas which have been determined to be suitable or unsuitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Decisions on inclusion will be made by the Congress after further study.

Numerous public and organizational meetings have been conducted during the inventory period. During May 1978, 17 public meetings were held statewide to explain the procedures which would be followed during the inventory phase. Each of these meetings was followed, the next day,

by a workshop where specific areas on the Preliminary Inventory Map were discussed. A 45-day public review and comment period followed the initial public meetings, during which time the public was encouraged to provide the Wilderness Inventory team with input for inclusion in an Interim Inventory Map published in August.

Team members divided the Conservation Area into numbered roadless polygons and conducted on-the-ground checks in each, developing descriptive narratives on findings and rationales. Another series of workshops was conducted in August, after publication of the Interim Inventory Map, to permit public comment and discussion of the proposed Wilderness Study Areas. This was part of the 30-day review and comment period provided after map publication.

A Draft Wilderness Inventory Map of the California Desert Conservation Area is scheduled for release in November, followed by a 90-day public review and comment period during which public meetings will be conducted statewide to receive formal comments.

A Final Wilderness Inventory Map will include comments on the Draft and will be published in February 1979.

CDCA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Upon enactment of FLPMA, the Bureau of Land Management's California State Office began work to establish the California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee required by Section 601(g) of the Act. A draft charter and call for nominations of members were published in the Federal Register, November 23, 1976, and widely circulated to concerned organizations, agencies, and individuals, including the California Congressional Delegation and key members of the California State Legislature. News releases were mailed simultaneously to more than 1,000 media, including news services and networks.

The BLM received more than 160 communications, nominating 300 individuals for committee membership and offering constructive inputs for the charter. A proposed charter and nominations for the 15 appointments were forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior after intensive screening, interviews, and inquiries. The Committee was chartered and members appointed by the Secretary on January 19, 1977.

The Committee is balanced between the concept of a panel of distinguished leaders and a grassroots citizens' committee. The members are distinguished citizens and recognized leaders in their interests or disciplines, but they are a working committee whose task is to provide continuous input to a developing plan. Interests for disciplines represented include: public affairs, general public, social sciences, State government, local government, outdoor recreation, environmental education, earth sciences, wildlife, botanical resources, energy-utilities, mining-minerals, cultural resources, and Native Americans.

Current members of the California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee, appointed by the Secretary for the 1978-79 term are:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS: Laurence William (Bill) Lane, Jr., of Portola Valley, Chairman of the Board of Lane Publishing Company and publisher of Sunset Magazine.

GENERAL PUBLIC: Erna I. Schuiling of San Bernardino, past president of the League of Women Voters of California and member of the San Bernardino County Regional Parks Commission.

SOCIAL SCIENCE: Dr. Harvey S. Perloff of Los Angeles, Dean, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of California at Los Angeles.

STATE GOVERNMENT: James W. Burns of Davis, Assistant to the Secretary for State and Federal Planning, Resources Agency of California.

ELECTED GENERAL-PURPOSE GOVERNMENT: Clayton A. Record, Jr., of San Jacinto, Member of the Board of Riverside County.

OUTDOOR RECREATION: Genny Schumacher Smith of Palo Alto, author and free-lance writer; and Ronald J. Sloan of Thousand Oaks, land development consultant and past member of the Board of Trustees of the American Motorcycle Association.

EARTH SCIENCES: Dr. Richard Henry Jahns of Menlo Park, Dean, School of Earth Science, Stanford University.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES: W. Leon Hunter of Barstow, Director, Desert Research Center, Barstow Unified School District.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES: Dr. Wilbur M. Mayhew of Riverside, Professor of Zoology, University of California, Riverside.

BOTANICAL RESOURCES: Dr. Richard J. Vogl of Cypress, Professor of Biology, California State University, Los Angeles.

ENERGY-UTILITIES: Frank W. DeVore of San Diego, Vice President for Governmental Affairs, San Diego Gas and Electric Company.

MINING-MINERALS: Emmet D. (Dean) Lemon, Glendale, Manager of Environmental Affairs, U.S. Borax and Chemical Corporation.

NATIVE AMERICAN: Willie Pink of San Jacinto, cultural coordinator of Ahmum Education, Inc., an Indian study center.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: Ruth DeEtte Simpson of Redlands, curator of archaeology for the San Bernardino County Museum and county archaeologist.

In 1977, Committee members elected L.W. (Bill) Lane, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Lane Publications and Publisher of Sunset Magazine, as the initial Chairperson and Mrs. Erna I. Schuiling, a past president of the League of Women Voters of California, as Vice Chairperson.

In 1978, Clayton A. Record, Jr., Riverside County Supervisor, was elected Chairperson, and Ronald J. Sloan, land development consultant and past member of the Board of Trustees of the American Motorcycle Association, Vice Chairperson.

The Committee's initial meeting, March 7, 1977, in San Bernardino, set a pattern of public involvement that has continued and grown. Attendance at the meetings has ranged from 76 members of the public to more than 300 and the Committee has become established as a focal point for public involvement in the planning process.

The Committee has held five meetings during its first year and scheduled the same number for the second year. Meeting locations have been in Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Barstow, Needles, El Centro, and Bishop, reflecting the Committee's desire to reach desert communities as well as the public land users who live the metropolitan areas through the state.

A successful series of public forums on critical issues was initiated in 1978; e.g., 314 people attended the forum on Outdoor Recreation February 23-25 in San Diego. Other planned public forums have addressed such issues as mining, energy, transmission corridors, desert military bases, needs of desert communities, cultural resources, Native Americans, and

community issues. Further forums are planned on plant and wildlife resources, grazing, wild burros, use of the Desert for scientific research and education, and wilderness and scenic values.

Public input in the form of brief oral statements became repetitive during the first year, so the public forum format was developed to focus on key issues and obtain more meaningful public input and involvement.

The Committee also participated in several field trips, which provided on-the-ground experience. These field trips have been directed toward sensitive areas in the Conservation Area that will need special attention when management decisions are required.

Attendance at meetings has varied in proportion to the public concern for issues under discussion. The BLM mailing list for meeting notices has grown from an estimated 1,200 to more than 6,000. The notification process includes, in addition to the mailing, publication of Federal Register notices at least 30 days in advance, news releases mailed statewide, notices of meetings posted in local post offices in desert communities, paid advertisements in local newspapers, and distribution of slide and tape public service announcements to all southern California television stations.

	<u>Date and Location</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1977	March - San Bernardino	132
	April - Barstow	117
	July - Riverside	76
	September - Needles	84
	December - El Centro	122
1978	February - San Diego	314
	May - Bishop	103
	July - San Bernardino	242

The final meetings of 1978 are scheduled for San Bernardino and Riverside, to be held in the public forum format.

The Committee has given the Bureau of Land Management advice and recommendations on the work plan for the California Desert Plan, a critical issue in view of the tight deadline for plan completion; public involvement in the planning process; strategy for timely completion of resource inventory and contracting; key interim management issues, including wild burros and off-road vehicle use of the Conservation Area; and the process for coordinating the Plan and accompanying environmental impact statement. The concept of a two-year inventory phase, followed by two years of plan preparation and environmental impact statement preparation was refined by the Committee and is basic to the effort of meeting the deadline of September 30, 1980, for Plan completion. As the data collection/inventory phase ends, and the plan preparation phase begins, the Advisory Committee's work will intensify, rising to an anticipated peak of public involvement when the Draft California Desert Plan and Draft EIS are released for public review in January 1980.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

One of the most important and active aspects of the planning process for the California Desert Conservation Area has been the development of a public participation and involvement program to assure adequate public contribution to the California Desert Plan.

During the inventory phase, many methods of notification and contact were utilized to inform people about the program and to describe the means and methods whereby the general public could participate and could make their needs and desires known.

Initial contact and continuing coordination have been developed with other governmental agencies having an interest in the California Desert, including Federal, State and local groups. Contracts have been awarded, and work completed, on State and national opinion polls, with the results analyzed for planning guidance. Representatives of the private economic sector using the Desert have been brought into the inventory and planning process. Both formal and informal meetings have been conducted with individuals and groups. The California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee has provided opportunities for public input by scheduling time during each meeting to take comments, suggestions, and criticism from members of the general public.

The following sections provide more details of the public participation and involvement opportunities, actions and results in all major areas.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Contacts and meetings have been held with key elected or appointed local officials in 23 cities and 8 counties throughout southern California to explain the Desert Planning Program and to request input from local agencies. An inventory of all adopted local government plans has been completed and analysis of their relevance to the public lands in the Desert Conservation Area will be completed by January 1979.

Initial coordination meetings have been conducted with all key State agencies, particularly those concerned with resources management, and liaison is, and will be, continuing. Many state agencies have been directly involved in the compilation of resource inventories. Others have been frequently helpful in coordinating planning development.

All field offices of those Federal agencies responsible for land management within the geographic boundaries of the Conservation Area have been contacted for the development of continuing coordination. Special orientations have been supplied by the Desert Planning Staff and recommendations have been requested from these agencies. In addition, progress reports have been made on a continuing basis to Federal agency coordinating committees such as the Pacific Southwest Coordinating Committee in San Francisco. Many of the Federal agencies have been directly involved in developing the resource inventories.

Issues and concerns which have been indicated by other land management agencies (Federal or State) include ORV encroachment, boundary identification, and coordination of wilderness management and energy and transmission

proposals. Concern in Death Valley National Monument is primarily over the burro problem, but also over mining impacts. At Joshua Tree National Monument, much of which has been designated as wilderness, concern exists over the location of utility lines between the southern boundary and Interstate 10. Mining is also a problem in view of the fact that it is having an impact on air quality and wilderness values.

The State of California has major concern over the mineral rights of Anza Borrego State Park, which still belong to the Federal Government. The State is also developing an 11,000-acre ORV park at Ocotillo Wells.

OPINION POLLS

A survey of "National Opinions Concerning the California Desert Conservation Area" was conducted by the Gallup Organization, Inc., under terms of a \$6,915 contract awarded by BLM. The Gallup interviewers talked to 1,506 adult men and women aged 18 and over nationwide.

Highest levels of support were expressed for protecting wildlife and ecology; protecting scenery and natural character of the land; protecting areas of historical importance and controlling recreational and other public use. Greatest opposition was to commercial development, mining, and places for off-road vehicles.

Another survey, "California Public Opinion and Behavior Regarding the California Desert," was conducted by the Field Research Corporation as part of a \$9,700 contract awarded by BLM. The statistical sample totaled 514 males and 544 females in 120 areas throughout California, selected to represent the State population in the 18 years of age and older group.

The things which most people objected to in the Desert included motor-cycle riding, dune-buggy riding, target shooting, hunting and four-wheel driving. Nearly everyone wanted to see more protection of desert wildlife, desert scenery, natural character, and areas of historic and archaeological significance. Energy development was approved by a plural majority but encountered considerable resistance among those who opposed it. Most people had no opinion on mining; however, among those who did have an opinion, it was more opposed than favored.

PUBLIC CONTACT

The program to establish direct contact with the general public in both user and environmental groups crossed a broad spectrum of techniques including invitations to meetings of the CDCA Advisory Committee, the Wilderness Inventory Program, radio and television public service announcements, letters, meetings, and mailing list solicitations.

To date, 180 persons have made separate presentations to the CDCA Advisory Committee providing input to the inventory and planning process for the California Desert Plan. Panels have been conducted on recreation, energy, mining, cultural resources, Native Americans, military bases, and desert residents. After each panel discussion, Committee members participated in a question-and-answer session, followed by questions from the audience to the panel members.

Radio and television public service announcements were filmed and taped by BLM staff personnel and offered to each television and radio station

in the State. From the airings which have occurred to date, 150 letters which offered contributions, or requested further information, have been received in response.

The Wilderness Inventory Program which is a part of the comprehensive desert study, resulted in 17 Public participation meetings in May 1978, involving more than 3,500 attendees. A series of Wilderness Inventory Map Workshops was held in August-September, accompanied by an extended media campaign and invitational letters to an extensive statewide mailing list.

The Desert Planning Staff has made 75 separate presentations concerning the planning process and the program objectives before chambers of commerce, service clubs, schools, user groups, and environmental organizations. Meetings have also been conducted with 15 Indian tribal councils and/or Native American groups. Several hundred organized recreational groups have been contacted as part of the recreational study effort. These meetings and contacts have resulted in the development of a mailing list of 6,000-7,000 for the Desert Plan group and an additional 3,500 list for the wilderness group.

In addition, special position papers have been requested from all types of citizens groups with interests in recreation, community, environment, economics, etc. The purpose has been to have these groups spell out and clarify their attitudes and opinions as to how public lands in the California Desert Conservation Area should be planned and managed for the interim as well as the future. These papers are scheduled for submission in November 1978.

In a compilation of letters received which have not been directly solicited, 700 have provided information and input to the inventory process and have been included as part of the continuing data base.

PART II

INTERIM MANAGEMENT

INTERIM MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

The Federal Land Management and Policy Act contains a special mandate (Sec. 601(e)) for development of an interim program to manage, use, and protect the public lands and their resources now in danger of destruction, in the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) while the California Desert Plan is being prepared.

The following is a report on the progress to date and the outlook for major interim management activities in the CDCA.

BURRO MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

This program was implemented in mid-May 1977. Since that time, 458 wild burros have been gathered within the CDCA and disbursed under the Adopt-A-Burro Program. Despite this effort no gains are being made in the reduction of population numbers due to reproduction, and burro-caused resource damage is a continuing problem.

Depending on forthcoming budgets in Fiscal Years 1979 and 1980, the gathering of burros will resume on public lands in the Desert Conservation Area.

GEOTHERMAL DEVELOPMENT

An environmental impact statement concerning the proposed leasing and eventual development of geothermal resources in and around the Coso Known Geothermal Resource Area near the China Lake Naval Weapons Center in Inyo County is underway.

The proposed project area covers 80,640 acres and is considered to have one of the highest potentials in California for geothermal steam. The U.S. Geological Survey and industry sources estimate production would be in the 600 to 4500 megawatt range. The Department of Energy has funded a geothermal overview on the Coso KGRA, for existing data collection and issue scoping.

The Draft EIS is scheduled for distribution in February/March 1980, with the Final EIS scheduled for public release in September 1980, and the lease sale scheduled for December 1980.

Environmental analyses of geothermal leasing and development are also underway for the East Mesa Area (three KGRAs, one 10-MW powerplant, and a 48-MW powerplant expansion). A draft environmental assessment record on phased leasing in the North Salton Sea area is undergoing public review. Similar efforts are scheduled for FY-79 in the Yuha basin.

SAND DUNES

The Eureka Valley Dune is on public lands near the northwest corner of Death Valley National Monument and is one mile wide, three miles long, and 680 feet high. This unique area is inhabited by 30 species of birds, 14 reptiles, and at least 15 mammals as well as three species of endemic plants: Eureka Valley primrose, Eureka dunegrass, and shiny locoweed. The primrose and dunegrass have been recently designated "endangered" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 1973, the dune was designated a "special design area" as part of the Interim Critical Management Plan for the CDCA. After a public comment period and intensive study, the Eureka Dune was closed in 1976 to off-road vehicles but open to all other uses. The primary goal of management is to preserve the area's resources in their natural condition.

Because two of the endemic plants have been officially designated "endangered," an interim use supervision program is planned for the area to afford the degree of protection necessary to sustain these plants.

Considerable controversy was encountered in closing part of the Imperial (Algodones) Dunes in Imperial County to off-road vehicles. This was done to protect endangered species and a unique ecosystem. The proposed Federal listing of the Andrews dune scarab beetle has severe management implications for the total dune system.

LAW ENFORCEMENT RANGERS

A new phase of interim management occurred with the granting of law enforcement authority to BLM Rangers in the California Desert Conservation Area in April 1978. Under present staffing levels, each of the Rangers is responsible for patrolling more than one million acres within the Conservation Area. During Fiscal Year 1979, the staffing level is expected to increase from 13 to 20.

Ranger operations are directed toward protecting the public land resources and assisting visitors. Regular field patrols are scheduled for 28 sectors in the Desert Area, with emphasis placed on those receiving

the most use. Rangers contact users to explain proper use procedures and to discuss resource values. Emergency assistance for lost or injured visitors is frequently provided. Compliance with use regulations for such items as ORV use, protection of artifacts, campground use, and natural area policies is achieved through an approach that emphasizes environmental awareness and education.

MINERALS

Environmental assessments are currently being developed for three potassium prospecting permits, located south of Death Valley Junction, and two sodium preference right leases at Koehn Lake. These documents will be completed by Fall, 1978. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have inspected both locations and are awaiting the BLM EARs to determine if further action is needed.

Two limestone patent cases in the Antelope Valley will be completed in August, and data is being generated for similar patent cases.

DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA

Public input to the Bureau's management framework plan for the El Paso Planning Unit led to establishment of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area in Kern County in 1976 for the protection of outstanding desert wildlife habitat.

The Area has the highest known density of Desert Tortoises, at times estimated to be as high as 2,000 tortoises per square mile. Other wildlife species inhabiting the area include the rare Mojave ground squirrel and the Desert kit fox.

Future management of the area will be primarily for wildlife habitat, although other compatible uses will be allowed. The Desert Tortoise Natural Area presently experiences approximately 2,000 visitor-days per year, with expectations for substantial increases in visitors once the interpretive facilities scheduled for 1979 and 1980 are completed.

The BLM works with the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee and other citizen groups in coordinating planning for the Area. The Nature Conservancy is in the process of acquiring some of the private lands. The BLM is proceeding with justifications to acquire other inholdings of private lands, utilizing Land and Water Conservation Act funds.

PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

The 2,350-mile route from the Mexican to the Canadian Borders was established by the National Trails System Act and includes 145 miles under BLM jurisdiction in California. Of that amount, construction has been completed on almost 40 miles in the Desert Conservation Area. Another 16 miles has been scheduled for construction contract award in FY-79. The BLM is now in the process of developing property line surveys, trail location identification, and preliminary contacts with private landowners in preparation for future acquisition action.

Condemnation of easements or other interests is specifically prohibited by the National Trails Act. However, legislation is pending to provide some condemnation authority. In addition, illegal use of the trail by motorcyclists is difficult to halt entirely since available law enforcement authority has not been completely implemented yet.

VISITOR CENTERS

Another interim management program is the operation of visitor centers in the California Desert. The Barstow Visitor Center has been operational since 1975 and is receiving considerable use. The Bureau's increased visibility has resulted in about a 30-percent increase in visitors to the center. In FY-79, the Yuha Visitor Center is scheduled to be constructed along Interstate 8 about 30 miles west of El Centro, near the Mexican Border.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Off-road vehicle (ORV) use is a significant part of the interim management program for recreation in the Desert Conservation Area. About 100 off-road-vehicle events will occur this year and will serve some 60,000 to 70,000 participants and spectators. Of equal importance is the incidental, nonorganized type of ORV use.

In 1973, the Bureau issued an Interim Critical Management Plan for Vehicular Use of the California Desert, designating areas and procedures for use of motorized vehicles in an area where such use had never before been restricted. Since that time, Federal regulations for off-road vehicle use in July 1979 have been drafted but have not yet been finalized.

GRAZING

Annual and supplemental grazing permits have been higher than normal as unusually heavy summer storms and a record-breaking wet season in the winter of 1977-78 have yielded increased forage. Funding of temporary employees during highest use period has reduced trespass and increased proper compliance on intermingled public and private lands.

ENERGY

Energy-related proposals from the private sector include a major nuclear powerplant (Sundesert); a major transmission line from a nuclear plant in Arizona (Palo Verde); several major transmission lines from proposed coal-fired plants in Utah and Nevada (I.P.P. and Allen-Warner Valley); proposals to site coal-fired plants in the eastern part of the California Desert.

In addition, areas near Randsburg and at several locations around the Imperial Valley are being proposed for geothermal leasing. Republic Geothermal, Inc., Magma and San Diego Gas and Electric Company are constructing three experimental geothermal powerplants in the Imperial Valley. The first two are on Federal leaseholds at East Mesa, near Holtville. The San Diego Gas and Electric plant is being constructed on private land near Heber.

Additional interim programs are: a proposed pipeline to carry coal slurry from south central Utah to the California coast for shipment to Japan; and actual construction on the SOHIO Crude Oil Pipeline from Long Beach, California, to Texas.

To date, environmental impact assessment is being kept current with such proposals as they reach the formal application stage.

YOUNG ADULT CONSERVATION CORPS (YACC)

In FY-79, BLM will operate a camp of about 175 YACC trainees doing various types of construction projects in the California Desert Conservation Area, such as installing protective devices around archaeological sites and fencing around open mining shafts to reduce hazards.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

In addition to the major programs mentioned, interim management must address a proposal to transport waste sludge from the Los Angeles-Orange County area to the Desert for disposal; and a proposal to transport northern California water from the vicinity of Hesperia across the Desert to the upper Coachella Valley. A variety of ongoing smaller programs include: temporary use permits; sales of materials (principally sand and gravel); periodic review of leases; minor rights-of-way; fire control activities; campground maintenance; cultural protection programs; mine shaft safety programs; vegetative protection (trespass abatement); and habitat management.

PART III

PROBLEMS AND PROPOSED REMEDIES

PROBLEMS AND PROPOSED REMEDIES

CDCA MINING REGULATIONS

Section 601(f) of FLPMA requires that mining claims within the CDCA shall be subject to such reasonable regulations as the Secretary may prescribe to protect the scenic, scientific, and environmental values of the public lands.

These regulations are now in draft form and are being reviewed at the field level prior to submission to the Director of the BLM and the Secretary of the Interior. While progress on developing and processing these regulations, which are of critical importance for both plan completion and interim management, has been slow, the outlook is now favorable for issuance of proposed rulemaking soon.

FUNDING FOR CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA PLANNING AND INTERIM MANAGEMENT

Section 601(j) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 authorizes the appropriation for Fiscal Years 1977 through 1981 of up to \$40,000,000 for California Desert long-range planning and interim management. The chart on the following page shows the level of appropriations to date and identified funding needs for the remainder of the five year FY 77-FY 81 period.

Although a total funding need of \$10.0 million was originally identified for planning, we can successfully complete the plan if the \$8.8 million

CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA FUNDING ANALYSIS - August 23, 1978
(\$ in millions)

	FY 77	FY 78	FY 79	FY 77-79 Recap	FY 80-81	5 Year Total				
PLANNING	2.4	2.0	3.5	2.71/ 2.0	2.0	7.9	6.7	2.1	8.8	
INTERIM										
MGMT.	(2.5)	(1.7)	(3.8)	(3.6)	(6.6)	(4.8)	(12.9)	(10.1)	(17.1)	(27.2)
-resource mgmt.	1.9	1.1	1.7	1.7	3.8	3.7	7.4	6.5	13.2	19.7
-cadastral survey	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2	1.0	0.6	0.8	1.4
-construction	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.3	1.2	0.5	2.6	1.9	1.3	3.2
-maintenance	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	1.2	0.4	1.9	1.1	1.8	2.9
TOTALS	4.9	3.7	7.3	6.3	8.6	6.82/ 20.8	16.8	19.2	36.0	

1/ Actual Congressional Appropriation for Desert Planning in FY 78 remained at the \$2.0 million level. The additional \$700,000 was shifted from other Resource programs.

2/ These appropriation figures reflect the House of Representatives recommended FY 79 add-ons.

over 5 years is appropriated. In addition, to meet the objectives of Section 601(e), appropriations totaling \$17.1 million for the FY 1980-1981 period are critical to interim management of the Desert's resource values while the plan is being completed and long range implementation is being initiated. In total this would bring total planning and interim management funding to \$36,000,000 of the five year \$40,000,000 authorization.

We are managing California Desert land and resource use much more than we were before designation of the Conservation Area. However, the constantly increasing use pressures from the Los Angeles and San Diego Basin population centers cause continuing damage to vegetation, animal life, geological resources, and historical and archaeological sites. For example, an estimated one-third of 40,000 important archaeological sites on public lands in the Desert have been vandalized. At the same time, visitors to the Desert are subjected to dangerous conditions, especially excessive heat, lack of water, isolation, and man-made hazards such as abandoned mine shafts and unexploded ordnance. A basic level of visitor management for human safety and resource protection is an interim management need.

A number of resource problems in the Desert require immediate attention and funding for interim management. For example, until we obtain sufficient funding for removal of wild burros from the Desert, vegetation/habitat will continue to decline. The prospect for continuing damage to vegetation and to archaeological and historical sites which results from off-road vehicle use will continue unless we can manage ORV activity at an acceptable level. Endangered plant and animal species are in need of immediate protection.

Augmented capability to reduce mineral-related and lands occupancy trespass in the Desert is needed, as is the capability to enforce the new mining regulations. We will also have to increase our monitoring and protection of those portions of the Desert identified as suitable for Wilderness Area designation.

We, therefore, believe the continued funding of California Desert planning and interim management at adequate levels is essential to dealing with the Desert program problems that we have identified to date.

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